

Nina Ahmad: Writing an award winning Aviva Community Fund entry

About Nina

Nina Ahmad is a freelance writer who lives and works in London. She has over two decades of experience as a journalist and editor on a range of weekly and monthly consumer titles including *Cosmopolitan*, *Marie Claire* and *Elle*, as well as national newspapers.

How to write a compelling entry for the Aviva Community Fund

Exciting, daunting, even nerve-wracking: writing an entry to apply for funds can be a rollercoaster. But as you clearly care strongly enough about your charity or community project to enter the Aviva Community Fund, you're off to a brilliant start.

Your entry needs to convey both the passion you have for your project AND the practicalities of what the funding would be used for if you were granted it. So, here are a few tips to consider when crafting your entry:

Getting started

Simply ask yourself why you are entering the Aviva Community Fund. Think about the inspiring work that your charity or community project does. Why should it be considered for this funding? How will funding benefit the charity or community project? And why is it particularly necessary now?

If you jot down your answers to these questions you will have the start of a compelling entry.

"For organisations submitting entries this year, I would recommend reading the Aviva Community Fund application guide thoroughly. Between this and the Aviva Community Fund Toolkit, there are lots of useful tips on how to construct and complete your application making the process really simple and fun to do."

Simone Francis, Kyrece's Legacy, 2015 Winner

The facts

While the emotional connection you have with your charity or community project is key to putting across your case for funding, it's also important that you accurately deliver the facts.

Set out all the information you feel is relevant early in your entry. Start with the obvious information such as your charity or community project name and the role it plays in your community.

Then look at the specifics. How will the funding make a difference? Who exactly will benefit from the funding? How long will it take for the funding to make an impact? How are you going to best put the funding to use?

Gather any strong statistics or evidence you have to support your need for funding. This can be as simple as counting the number of additional people who could join your organisation if you had this

funding, or the number of extra people you could help in the community if you received funding from the Aviva Community Fund. Showing how well you understand the needs of your project will help your entry stand out to people who read your entry and the judging panel.

“When it came to writing our submission, we wanted to tell a compelling story which not only brought to life what we do, but also what the funding would mean to us and who it would benefit. In order to do this, I wrote a list of everything I wanted to say and used this as a checklist to make sure I didn’t forget anything!”

Joanna Van de Poll, The Wychwoods Day Centre, 2015 Winner

Structure, style and tone

Trust your instinct when it comes to structuring your entry. Be bold, as every submission will be different and there isn’t a set formula for a winning entry. You may want to start with a strong statistic or fact about your charity. Or, you may feel that beginning with a personal story about someone who has benefitted from the work you do has more impact.

Write your entry as you would tell the story out loud to people. This will ensure that your voice and your enthusiasm for your cause come through.

To help keep your entry concise, avoid putting too many points in one paragraph. Keep your sentences short, that way people reading your entry will be able to process the information more easily. You can always use bullet points to highlight any really important facts in an effective way.

“Capturing everything you want to say within a specific word count can be a challenge so try not to waste your words. We wrote our responses to all the sections and then re-worked and refined each section until it was concise. You should also write the entry assuming the reader has no prior knowledge of the project or you as an organisation. This will ensure that you include the right level of detail to tell your story properly and paint a real picture for the reader.”

Rob Whitwood, Inspired Youth, 2015 Winner

When you’re done, read through and check your entry. Are you satisfied that the introduction will grab people’s attention? And do you leave a memorable impression at the end that will ensure people are still thinking about your entry when they cast their votes?

“Before we submitted our entry, we asked some of our other service users and colleagues to review the content. This was a really useful exercise as not only were they able to proof read and offer constructive feedback, but it meant that they also felt involved from the start. As a result, they were inspired to help promote our entry during the voting phase.”

Sarah Harris, Tibbs Dementia Services, 2015 Winner

Nina's top tips on writing a compelling Aviva Community Fund entry

1. **Focus the flow of your entry by asking the questions;** Why us? Why now? Why this level of funding? and make sure you include answers to all of these questions in your entry
2. **Convey the facts about your charity or community project clearly and accurately** in short, informative sentences
3. **Get your passion for the charity or community project across** by using personal stories and anecdotes about the inspiring work your organisation does
4. **Trust your instinct and be bold about why you are asking for funding** and what impact it will have on those who benefit from your organisation
5. **Make the most of the experience.** Writing a clear, focussed entry that demonstrates the impact your organisation has on the local community will always come in useful when communicating the work your project does, whatever the outcome of your Aviva Community Fund entry